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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ; CUBA; MEXICO; ARGENTINA-IRAN; 12/04/06; BUENOS
AIRES

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's papers report on the outcome of Venezuelan elections. Weekend papers cover Cuban Raul Castro's proposal of a negotiation with the US; the swearing-in of Mexican President Calderon; and the state of Argentina's ties with Iran following Judge Canicoba Corral's decision to request the international arrest of former Iranian government officials for the AMIA bombing case.

Conservative "La Prensa," business-financial "Ambito Financiero", leading "Clarín," and daily-of-record "La Nacion," as well as "El Tribuno de Salta" and other provincial papers report that Ambassador Wayne met with Governor Romero in Salta and that the two confirmed their commitment to fight drugs.

Leading "Clarín" (12/03) carries an op-ed piece by Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, headlined "Diplomacy plus pressure to deal with Northern Korea." In his story, Kissinger said that "the possibility of sanctions cannot be discarded."

2. OPINION PIECES

- "'The US will try to distance Kirchner from Chavez'"

Jorge Elias, on special assignment in Caracas for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (12/02) "Once Sunday elections in Venezuela are over, President Hugo Chavez will receive a report from General Alberto Muller Rojas, head of the Joint-Chiefs-of Staff, which he will read in detail..."

"In this report, Muller Rojas will say that 'there is a lobby from the US' to 'distance Nestor Kirchner from Chavez, given the close ties between Venezuela and Iran,' and to trigger 'disagreement between the government and the Peronist left (CGT, Madres de Plaza de Mayo and picketers' movements),' both among themselves and between them and the military."

"Muller Rojas said that 'these lobbying operations work by fueling internal contradictions in order to avoid the surge of a multi-polar world order.'"

"... 'The US will attempt to separate Kirchner from Chavez and also from the left wing of the Peronist party.'"

- "Venezuela - good and bad reasons favor Chavez"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, international analyst for leading "Clarín," writes (12/02) "Things are getting complicated for the US in Latin America and Hugo Chavez's most certain victory in Venezuela's presidential elections will not improve the scenario for Washington..."

"... As long as the latest phase in capitalist development continues to be presented as the inevitable prosperity of those who are already prosperous, leaderships like Chavez's will have fertile soil to grow.

"One only has to look at Ecuador and the victory of Rafael Correa or the divided Mexico in which Felipe Calderon has just taken office to reach the conclusion that even the victories of the right wing may be shaky... There is a reality in the region, and those who continue to ignore it are putting everybody else at risk."

- "Pressure mounts for Washington to negotiate with Cuba"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (12/04) "Raul Castro's proposal to negotiate with the US was rejected by the Bush administration and downplayed by the US media."

"However, US experts and observers who have closely followed the evolution of the Cuban situation consider it a historic move and say that it will reinforce the position of those who have lobbied for a change of policy regarding the island, particularly lifting the embargo."

- "Growing up"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," comments (12/03) "Yesterday was a day of high symbolic value for Cubans. They celebrated a transition that will have huge historic importance for the island."

"It is in this context that one should interpret Raul Castro's proposal of dialogue with Washington... The USG's rejection is not surprising but it is impressive since it follows the same logic with which it has handled other conflicts in the world, to the results

everybody knows.

"The US-Cuban confrontation is a long-standing legacy of the Cold War. US experts themselves have acknowledged that the island is no longer a threat. And the embargo against Cuba has been a colossal failure that strengthened rather than weakened the Castro regime. On the basis of these realities, it is now time to mature."

- "The US assesses passengers' 'terrorist risk'"

Leonardo Mindez, on special assignment in Washington for leading "Clarín," writes (12/02) "According to the Homeland Security Department, if you traveled to the US after the September 11 attacks, you were given a score to measure the risk that you may belong to a terrorist organization."

"... The news about the ATS system even took human rights organizations that defend privacy by surprise. They had thought that the ATS was only used to identify baggage, not passengers. According to David Sobel, a lawyer from Fundacion Frontera Electronica, 'it is probably the most invasive system developed by the government in terms of number of affected people.'"

- "A beginning without a honeymoon"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion" on special assignment in Mexico, D.F., writes (12/02) "... Pamela Starr, Mexican analyst at the largest multinational consulting corporation on political analysis, Eurasia Group, said that five months after winning elections and having gone through a difficult transition, 'there will not be any honeymoon for Calderon.'"

"During the first weeks and months of his term in office, Calderon will have to face a series of serious challenges. The major and most immediate challenge will be posed by the leftist opposition, but it will not be the only one.' But she trusts the new president's 'realistic strategy.'"

- "Contradictions"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," writes

(12/02) "Be careful. Let's not believe that this conflict is the result of Mexicans going crazy. You could be wrong. It is happening to them, but it is a sign of a democratic weakness that surpasses the borders of that contradicting country..."

"It is the cost of the well-spread model of the last fifteen years, which did not take into account that modernizing a country means to eliminate, not boost, inequality..."

"The main threat to democracy in the region is still a distribution system marked by exclusion which gains explosive features and ends up bursting. The first thing to do is to neutralize this threat."

- "Kirchner, Iran and AMIA"

Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, professor of International Relations at Universidad San Andres, writes in "Enfoques" supplement (daily-of-record "La Nacion") (12/03) "Judge Roberto Canicoba Corral's decision is a major event. Furthermore, it will perhaps be the most important judicial decision and the one having the greatest impact in the first six years of the 21st century regarding Argentine diplomatic and defense issues..."

"... (Argentina's) willingness to cooperate with the US on security issues was evident - while (the Argentine government) criticized Washington's 'global war on terrorism' and its military deployment in Iraq, it supported Washington's security policies..."

"... Washington and Tel Aviv could eventually manipulate Buenos Aires' complaint against Tehran for their own benefit. The interesting thing is that they have not done it so far and they are extremely cautious on this issue."

"Argentina will have to avoid relying on any of them to handle its difficult situation with Iran... It is important to understand that 2007 will be a crucial year - either the international community decides to live with the fact that Iran could become a nuclear power in the next decade, or military actions will be launched against Tehran with unpredictable consequences for the Middle East and the world."

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